

## EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

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Remarks

Executive Secretary

5/7/84

Date

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United States Department of State

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**SUBJECT:** Nicaraguan Pastoral Letter and Reply by Nicaraguan Government

Since Central America continues to be a subject of concern to many of your readers, I am sending some material which you might find useful. Enclosed you will find copies of the Easter pastoral letter written by Nicaraguan Bishops, in which they called upon the Nicaraguan Government to engage in conciliation talks with all parties in Nicaragua. In addition, I have enclosed the response of Interior Minister Borge and Junta Coordinator Ortega to the Bishops' letter, as reported in two Sandinista newspapers in Managua.

*O. J. Reich for*  
Otto J. Reich  
Coordinator of Public Diplomacy  
for Latin America and the Caribbean

DCI  
EXEC  
REG

01-387

ROUGH TRANSLATION

1. Following articles appeared in Barricada of April 25:
2. Quote - Daniel: It is certain that Reagan applauds the local bishops.

Pastoral: Political Position Which Supports Yankee Aggression.

The Coordinator of the Governing Junta, Revolutionary Commander Daniel Ortega, warned yesterday that with the pastoral letter issued three days ago, the bishops have established "a political position which supports the aggressive plans of the American administration against the Nicaraguan people."

Daniel recalled the assistance given by the bishops in the past to the Somocista dictatorship when they even honored Sandino's assassin with the title of "Prince of the Church," and they blessed the arms of the American marines who intervened in our country. He said that this latest position is just a repetition of the history of the highest authorities in the Catholic Church in Nicaragua.

"This pastoral letter fits within the plan for internal destabilization," according to the Member of the National Directorate of the FSLN and he added that "it is certain that Mr. Reagan is applauding this pastoral letter which is just another action in support of that 'aggressive' policy of Washington."

Referring to the bishops' request for a "dialogue" with the counterrevolution, Commander Ortega affirmed that the Catholic hierarchy brings up the matter while refusing to negotiate with our revolutionary government, thus demonstrating an "anti-Christian attitude." At the same time he expressed the revolutionary hope that not all the bishops are in agreement with the letter put out by the Conference, which leaves clear its backing for the North American policy which, he said, has been condemned by the international community and even by the bishops of the United States. End quote.

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3. Quote - They Refuse to Dialogue with the People and They Want to Dialogue with the Assassins.

Daniel: Bishops' Pastoral Letter Plays into the Hands of the Yankees

The Nicaraguan Church authorities "are repeating the policy of the North American administration" and they are demonstrating an anti-Christian attitude, since "they refuse to dialogue with the people and with the Revolution, but on the other hand they want us to dialogue with the assassins." That's the way the Coordinator of the Governmental Junta, Commander Daniel Ortega, commented on the Nicaraguan Bishops' recent pastoral letter which, he emphasized, "plays into the hands of intervention and the North American administration" against our country.

"It is absolutely absurd that those who are demanding a dialogue with the Contras have not even accepted a dialogue with the Revolutionary Government," as we proposed several months ago, "and they have even refused to acknowledge it," Daniel said.

He pointed out that the position of the Catholic hierarchy "is similar to that of the past when the bishops of this country blessed the arms of the North-American marines who landed under a plan of open occupation and murder" in Nicaragua.

Nevertheless, "We suspect that even though this document was signed by all the bishops, not all are really in agreement with this position," even though in the Episcopal Conference the majority opinion rules.

It is certain that the North American administration will be applauding this pastoral letter, which plays a part in that aggressive policy which has been condemned by the North American bishops, by the world, and which in this case is being defended by some Nicaraguan bishops." Daniel said. End quote.

4. Following article appeared in El Nuevo Diario on April 26:

5. Quote - Sergio Talks About the Pastoral.

"In 1912 There Were Bishops Who Blessed Yankee Arms".

"The pastoral letter is a document that has had its positive effect, since it has clarified many positions that were not yet very clear," said Dr. Sergio Ramirez Mercado on commenting yesterday on the pastoral letter put out recently by the bishops.

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On being approached by the journalists, Dr. Ramirez indicated that while the poor suffer and bury their dead, there is a minority which identifies with the goals of the interventionists. He added that this situation is nothing new, since our history recalls that in 1912 there were bishops who blessed the invaders arms.

"Nevertheless," he said, "we cannot speak of a hierarchy that has sold itself out, since there have been other kinds of bishops of the stature of Antonio Valdivieso who have offered their lives for the cause of the poor -- which indicates that, for true Christians, not everything is hopeless.

As for the electoral process, Dr. Ramirez reiterated that the will of the Revolution is to carry the electoral process forward. In fact, he said, it has been progressing according to plan. Nevertheless, he emphasized, at this time the principal concern is not the electoral process but the problem of aggression, the mining of the ports, the problem of supplies caused by that aggression which has priority over the electoral process.

On another issue, asked about the process under way against the Reagan administration in the highest Court of Justice in the Hague, he made clear that the Nicaraguan government is asking for the necessary precautionary measures. "We are asking," he stated, "that the International Court of Justice order the United States to cease mining our ports, to stop the economic blockade, and to stop the supplying of arms in order to get on with the electoral process."

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

(TRANSLATION)

LS NO. 112703  
RHC/ALK/MM/WD/BP  
Spanish

**Pastoral Letter on Reconciliation from the Nicaraguan Bishops**

**To the priests and deacons in our dioceses:**

**To members of religious orders:**

**To catechists and bearers of the Word:**

**To our brothers and sisters in the apostolic lay movements:**

**To principals, teachers, and students in Catholic schools:**

**To all our beloved faithful:**

Grace and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters:

At this solemn Easter celebration, the ultimate expression of God's love for mankind through the redemption, we invite you to share more fully in the spiritual wealth of the Holy Year, which will be extended in Nicaragua by a special concession from Pope John Paul II until June 17, 1984, the feast of the Holy Trinity.

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This extension and the urgent need in our society for sincere and brotherly reconciliation through individual conversion have moved us to send you this exhortation.

I. Doctrinal Section

1. Sin, the root of all evil:

When sin came into the world, all things were changed profoundly; the soil yielded brambles; civilizations and institutions passed away; man himself rebelled against his fellow men, and the empire of tyranny and death began (cf. Gen. 3:16-19; 4:7-8)

Man, created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) did not wish to acknowledge or glorify Him; man became vain in his imagination, and his foolish heart was darkened (Rom. 1:21). There were also those who, like Satan, disguised themselves as angels of light to deceive others and lead them to perdition. (cf. II Corinthians 11:14-15). A poorly understood anthropocentrism plunged mankind into the heavy bondage of sin.

2. Redemption by Christ:

Christ, by His death and resurrection, has reconciled us to God, to ourselves, and to our brothers and sisters, has freed us from the bondage of sin (cf. Col. 1:20-22, Cor. 5:18), and has given His church the mission of transmitting His message, pardon, and grace (cf. Mt. 28:18-20, Mk. 15-20).

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All this should be for us a call to conversion; it should be the beginning of a radical change in spirit, mind, and life [\*] (cf. John Paul II, Bull, "Open the Doors to the Redeemer," No. 5).

There are three aspects to this conversion, which redeems our individual and collective lives:

(A) We must avoid personal sin, any act that disrupts our baptismal alliance with God.

(B) We must banish any sinful attitudes from our hearts, that is, any habitual rejection, whether conscious or unconscious, of Christian standards and moral values.

(C) We must put an end to such sins of society as participation in injustice and violence.

3. Sin after the redemption:

Nonetheless, sin has persisted in the world since our redemption by Christ, because:

(A) Man abuses his freedom and does not accept God's grace.

(B) Society has become secularized and is no longer oriented toward God; it does not heed the church, the

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[\* Unless otherwise indicated, quotations throughout the letter have been translated without reference to any official English text.]



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universal sacrament of salvation, but considers it an alienating institution.

(C) At times it claims to accept Christ and His teachings, but it repudiates the church and thereby falls into the temptation of establishing other "churches" than the one founded by the apostles and their successors, the legitimate bishops.

(D) We forget that coexistence can only be based on an accurate perception of the individual as an intelligent, free, and religious human being, with rights and duties devolving from his very nature (cf. John XXIII, Enc. Pacem in Terris, No. 9-10).

(E) Materialistic concepts of mankind distort the person and teachings of Christ, reduce man to merely physical terms without taking account of his spiritual nature, so he remains subject to physical forces called the "dialectics of history." And man, alienated from God and from himself, becomes disoriented, without moral and religious reference points, without a higher nature, insecure and violent.

## II. Our Situation

### 1. The Problem of Sin in the World

Pope John Paul II, in his message for the 17th World Day of Prayer for Peace on January 1, 1984, expressed his

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concern about the current world situation, a concern which we, too, share: "Peace is truly precarious, and injustice abounds. Relentless warfare is occurring in many countries, continuing on and on despite the proliferation of deaths, mourning, and destruction, without any apparent progress toward a solution. It is often the innocent who suffer, while passions become inflamed and there is the risk that fear will lead to an extreme situation."

2. In Nicaragua

A. Belligerent Situation:

Our country, too, is plagued by a belligerent situation pitting Nicaraguan against Nicaraguan, and the consequences of this situation could not be sadder:

. Many Nicaraguan youths and men are dying on the battlefields.

. Many others look toward the future with the fear of seeing their own lives prematurely ended.

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- . A materialistic and atheistic educational system is undermining the consciences of our children.

- . Many families are divided by political differences.

- . The suffering of mothers who have lost their children, which should merit our great respect, is instead exploited to incite hatred and feed the desire for vengeance.

- . Farmworkers and Indians, for whom the Church reserves a special love, are suffering, living in constant anxiety, and many of them are forced to abandon their homes in search of a peace and tranquility that they do not find.

- . Some of the mass media, using the language of hate, encourage a spirit of violence.

B. The Church:

One, albeit small, sector of our Church has abandoned ecclesiastical unity and surrendered to the tenets of a materialistic ideology. This sector sows confusion inside and outside Nicaragua through a campaign extolling its own ideas and defaming the legitimate pastors and the faithful who follow them. Censorship of the media makes it impossible to clarify the positions and offer other points of view.

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### 3. Foreign interference

Foreign powers take advantage of our situation to encourage economic and ideological exploitation. They see us as support for their power, without respect for our persons, our history, our culture, and our right to decide our own destiny.

Consequently, the majority of the Nicaraguan people live in fear of their present and uncertainty of their future. They feel deep frustration, clamor for peace and freedom. Yet their voices are not heard, muted by belligerent propaganda on all sides.

### 4. The root of these evils

This situation is rooted in the sin of each and every one, in injustice and oppression, in exploitative greed, in political ambition and abuse of power, in disregard for moral and religious values, in lack of respect for human dignity, in forgetting, abandoning, and denying God.

## III. Response of the Church

### 1. Conversion and Reconciliation

The Church ardently desires and encourages peace and tranquility and believes that there is only one path to that end, conversion. This means that we must all turn our eyes and heart to God, our Father, who through Christ offers us the true path to reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace.

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"It is not behavior alone that needs to be changed, but the heart that guides our lives. At the community level it is important to examine ourselves as persons, as groups and social units, not only as victims but also as authors of certain collective deviations from God's plan, in order to implement together God's plan for constructive human endeavor." (cf. Peace and Conversion, a Pontifical document issued by the Commission on Justice and Peace at Rome on September 30, 1983.)

The entire universe is the object of redemption since it also reveals the glory of God and must be sanctified and consecrated to God (Cf. Vatican II, Const. Lumen Gentium, No. 34). Christ resurrected is at the center of history and of the world, leading us toward its full maturity and its final liberation from all the forces of evil (Cf. Vatican II, Const. Lumen Gentium, No. 48).

## 2. Confession: the path to conversion

John Paul II in his address on reform and holiness given at Rome on November 26, 1983, said: "To assist such conversion, the Lord instituted the sacrament of reconciliation. In it Christ Himself goes to meet the man oppressed by the awareness of his own weakness, He raises him and gives him the necessary strength to continue his path. With the sacrament the life of the Resurrected Christ enters

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the spirit of the believer, bringing forth renewed generosity of purpose and an enhanced capacity to live by the Gospel."

Jesus reconciled all things, bringing peace through the Cross (Col:20) and transmitted this power to His disciples (cf. Jn4:21, 13:34-35, 12-17).

Preparing to receive the benefits of the sacrament of confession is an important step in conversion. A sincere examination of our sins, self-criticism of our attitudes and our life, these reveal to us our faults and make us abhor sin which is an offense against God, an affront to the Church, and damage or injury to our neighbor. It encourages us to turn totally to God and to reform our lives, it brings us back to the Church and closer to our brothers.

### 3. Dialogue:

The road to social peace is possible through dialogue, sincere dialogue that seeks truth and goodness. "That [dialogue] must be a meaningful and generous offer of a meeting of good intentions and not a possible justification for continuing to foment dissension and violence." (John Paul II, Greeting to Nicaragua, March 4, 1983)

It is dishonest to constantly blame internal aggression and violence on foreign aggression.

It is useless to blame the evil past for everything without recognizing the problems of the present.

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All Nicaraguans inside and outside the country must participate in this dialogue, regardless of ideology, class, or partisan belief. Furthermore, we think that Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the Government must also participate in this dialogue. If not, there will be no possibility of a settlement, and our people, especially the poorest among them, will continue to suffer and die.

The dialogue of which we speak is not a tactical truce to strengthen positions for further struggle but a sincere effort to seek appropriate solutions to the anguish, pain, exhaustion, and fatigue of the many, many people who long for peace, the many, many people who want to live, to rise from the ashes, to see the warmth of a smile on a child's face, far from terror, in a climate of democratic harmony.

The terrible chain of reactions inherent in friend-enemy dialectics is halted by the word of God, who demands that we love even our enemies and that we forgive them. He urges us to move from distrust and aggressiveness to respect and harmony, in a climate conducive to true and objective deliberation on our problems and a prudent search for solutions. The solution is reconciliation. (cf. John Paul II, Peace and Reconciliation. Address by the Pope in El Salvador, March 6, 1983).

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If we are not open to objective acknowledgement of our situation and the events that distress our people ideologically, politically, and militarily, then we are not prepared, in a true and Christian way, for reconciliation for the sake of the real, living wholeness of our nation.

Considering that freedom of speech is a vital part of the dignity of a human being, and as such is indispensable to the well-being of the nation inasmuch as a country progresses only when there is freedom to generate new ideas, the right to free expression of one's ideas must be recognized.

The great powers, which are involved in this problem for ideological or economic reasons, must leave the Nicaraguans free from coercion.

#### Conclusion:

If we want our conversion to find true expression in the life of our national community, we must strive to lead lives worthy of the Gospel (cf. Phl:27, Ep4:1), reject all lies, all harmful or offensive words, all anger and evil utterance, and be benevolent and forgive generously as God forgave us through Christ (cf. Ep4:25-32, Col3:12-14).

It behooves us to value each life as a gift of God, help the young to find meaning and value in their lives and prepare themselves for their future roles in society, forgive



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enemies and adversaries, facilitate the return of those who have left their country and welcome them with an open heart, free those imprisoned for ideological differences, create a climate of friendship and peace conducive to social harmony.

"In the great task of bringing peace and reconciliation to the nation, the family as the basic unit of society cannot be ignored. Nor can respect for its rights." (Cf. Gaudium et Spes N.52, quoted by John Paul II in his address to the bishops of El Salvador, February 24, 1984).

May the Holy Virgin, who played her part in our redemption with such exemplary fortitude, provide us with the necessary strength to perform our Christian duty of love and peace.

And may the Lord of Peace grant us all, always and in all our endeavors, the peace and tranquility which we seek (cf. 2 Th3:16).

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Done at Managua, April 22, Easter Sunday, 1984 (to be read and published in the usual manner), Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua.

Pablo A. Vega  
Bishop of Juigalpa  
President

Bosco Vivas Robelo  
Assistant Bishop of Managua  
Secretary

Miguel Obando Bravo  
Archbishop of Managua

Julian Barni  
Bishop of Leon

Leovigildo Lopez Fitoria  
Bishop of Granada

Ruben Lopez Ardon  
Bishop of Esteli

Salvador Schlaeffer B.  
Bishop of Bluefields

Carlos Santi  
Bishop of Matagalpa

Pedro L. Vilchez V.  
Prelate of Jinotega

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## WORLD NEWS

# Sandinista Official Assails Bishops' Bid for Talks

By Bernd Debusmann  
*Reuter*

MANAGUA, Nicaragua, April 25—Interior Minister Tomas Borge has branded as "criminal" a call by the country's Roman Catholic bishops for peace talks, rejecting any negotiations with U.S.-backed insurgents.

"We will never negotiate with the contras," Borge said in an interview, using the term for right-wing rebels armed and financed by the CIA.

In a pastoral letter read in most of Nicaragua's churches over Easter, the nine Roman Catholic bishops suggested a dialogue for peace involving all Nicaraguans, including those "who have risen in arms against the government."

"This is a criminal suggestion," Borge said. "The pastoral letter seeks confrontation and violates the law of the land."

The rebel forces include senior former members of ousted dictator Anastasio Somoza's National Guard, the only Nicaraguan organization which was formally declared illegal after Somoza's removal in a broad-based popular revolution spearheaded by the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

Borge, the only surviving founder-member of the front, said the bish-

ops' pastoral letter was "more radical in its anti-Nicaraguan tone . . . than even statements by Kirkpatrick."

Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is seen here as a leading proponent of military force to oust the nine Sandinista commanders who effectively run Nicaragua.

Diplomats said the pastoral letter and the Sandinistas' angry reaction to it could herald a new round of confrontation between the church hierarchy and the state.

Church-state tensions were thrown into sharp focus a year ago when Pope John Paul II visited here and harshly criticized the Sandinista-promoted "popular church," whose priests see no conflict between Christianity and left-wing revolution.

The bishops' pastoral letter at Easter said, "The road through which social peace can be achieved necessarily leads through dialogue. All Nicaraguans inside and outside the country should participate in this dialogue, regardless of ideology, class or party position. What is more, we feel that Nicaraguans who have risen in arms against the government must participate."



**TOMAS BERGE**  
 ... "this is a criminal suggestion"

# Nicaraguan Assails Bishops in Renewed Conflict

By RICHARD J. MEISLIN

Special to The New York Times

MANAGUA, Nicaragua, April 25 — A top Nicaraguan leader today condemned a call by the country's Roman Catholic bishops for talks with the opposition, saying that it was part of a "plan of internal destabilization."

The leader, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, coordinator of the Nicaraguan junta, charged that the nine bishops were "repeating the policy" of the Reagan Administration. He said their position, expressed in a pastoral letter, "supports the plans of aggression of the North American Administration against the Nicaraguan people."

Mr. Ortega's remarks, published in the official newspaper *Barricada*, reflected renewed frictions between the Sandinista Government and the Roman Catholic Church. The way in which the issue has developed, meanwhile, demonstrated the manner in which information and opinion reaches the Nicaraguan public.

The pastoral letter, signed by Nicaragua's nine Catholic bishops, was issued Easter Sunday. It said that "dialogue is necessary if we are to have social peace" and added:

"All Nicaraguans, within the country or abroad, without regard to their ideology, class or political affiliation, should participate in this dialogue. Moreover, we believe that those Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the Government should participate."

## Publication Barred at First

The position of the bishops ran counter to that of the Government, which has repeatedly vowed not to negotiate with the anti-Sandinista rebels. Mr. Ortega said that it was "totally ab-

surd" that the bishops, who he said "have rejected a dialogue with the people and the revolution, on the other hand want us to have a dialogue with the assassins."

The Government initially responded to the pastoral letter by barring its publication. On Monday, the official Sandinista newspaper — the only paper to mention the letter — published a sarcastic article about the bishops' call under the headline, "Bishops ask 'pardon' for the Somocistas."

Much of the criticism in the article stemmed from the bishops' lack of emphasis on outside causes for Nicaragua's problems. The Government regularly asserts that the guerrilla opposition lacks any internal support and functions only because of United States backing.

The pastoral letter said that it was "not always honest to justify internal aggressions and violence on aggressions from outside." But it criticized the superpowers as well, saying that "they see us as an object to support their power, without respecting our people, our history, our culture and our right to decide our own destiny."

## 'On the Side of Imperialism'

Although the text of the letter had not yet been made public, Tuesday morning's issue of *Barricada* quoted the mother of a young man who died in the 1979 uprising here as having asked "How is it possible that the bishops propose that the people talk to the assassins?" She said the bishops were "on the side of imperialism, of the traitors."

Other mothers of fallen soldiers, whom the newspaper described as representing "moral authority," were

quoted in a similar vein.

The same day's issue of *El Nuevo Diario*, another pro-Government newspaper, published an editorial roundly denouncing the pastoral letter and asking, among other things: "Can the authors of this document present one single mother of a martyr who would confirm that she has been manipulated to hate and seek revenge?"

*El Nuevo Diario's* editorial appeared directly under a photograph of President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, frolicking in the waters off Hawaii, over the caption, "Happy while the world burns." Beside the editorial was another article reporting the statement of Bishop Paul Moore Jr. of the Episcopal Diocese of New York on Sunday that the Reagan Administration's Central American policy was "illegal, inconsistent, ill-advised and immoral."

## Full Text Is Published

The full text of the pastoral letter appeared in Tuesday evening's issue of *La Prensa*, an independent newspaper that frequently spars with the Government.

It was preceded by an explanation from the Interior Ministry, which said that it was authorizing the publication "because of superior orders," even though the letter "contains violations of the laws of our country and positions in open confrontation with the revolution."

It added that it was for the people to "judge the positions of the top ecclesiastical hierarchy."

*La Prensa*, which has refused to publish several times rather than submit to Government censorship, has published no reaction or commentary about the pastoral letter.

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